

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claim 1. (previously presented)      Stable slurries for use in the manufacturing of shells for investment casting of metals and for use in the manufacturing of mould and core coatings for metal casting, comprising

    a silica or alumina sol;  
    a mineral in finely divided particles including trivalent or tetravalent cations; and  
    at least 0.01% by weight of a water soluble salt to convert the trivalent or tetravalent cations to moieties that are unable to cause flocculation of the slurries.

Claim 2. (cancelled)

Claim 3. (previously presented)      The slurries according to claim 1, wherein cationic component is one or more of iron, aluminum or zirconium compounds present in the mineral or in water; and wherein the compounds comprise ferrous chromite, olivine (mixed magnesium and iron<sup>II</sup> silicates), norite, and ferruginous mullite (aluminum silicate).

Claims 4 – 8 (cancelled)

Claim 9. (previously presented)      The slurries according to claim 1, wherein the water soluble salt is selected from one or more of an alkali phosphate, including trisodium or tripotassium; or a reducing agent including sodium or potassium hypophosphite; and wherein the water soluble salt is added to the silica or alumina sol prior to the silica or alumina sol being mixed with the mineral.

Claims 10 – 15 (cancelled)

Claim 16. (new)      Stable slurries for use in the manufacturing of shells for investment casting of metals and for use in the manufacturing of mould and core coatings for metal casting, comprising

an alumina sol;

a mineral in finely divided particles including trivalent or tetravalent cations; and at least 0.01% by weight of a water soluble salt to convert the trivalent or tetravalent cations to moieties that are unable to cause flocculation of the slurries.

Claim 17. (new)      The slurries according to claim 1, wherein the mineral is one or more of ferrous chromite, olivine (mixed magnesium and iron<sup>II</sup> silicates), norite, or ferruginous mullite (aluminum silicate).

Claim 18. (new)      The slurries according to claim 9, wherein the mineral is one or more of ferrous chromite, olivine (mixed magnesium and iron<sup>II</sup> silicates), norite, or ferruginous mullite (aluminum silicate).

Claim 19. (new)      The slurries according to claim 9, wherein the water soluble salt is sodium or potassium hypophosphite.

Claim 20. (new)      The slurries according to claim 1, wherein the mineral is one or more of ferrous chromite, olivine (mixed magnesium and iron<sup>II</sup> silicates), norite, or ferruginous mullite (aluminum silicate) and the water soluble salt is sodium or potassium hypophosphite.